



Docket No.: 21.1924

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re the Application of:

Sumiyo OKADA

Serial No. 09/336,706

Group Art Unit: 2142

Confirmation No. 7969

Filed: June 21, 1999

Examiner: Prieto, Beatriz

For: MESSAGE DISPLAY METHOD AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE SYSTEM AND
STORAGE MEDIUM

APPEAL BRIEF UNDER 37 CFR § 41.37

Mail Stop Appeal Brief- Patents
Commissioner for Patents
PO Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

In a Notice of Appeal filed December 21, 2004, the applicants appealed the Examiner's September 21, 2004, Office Action finally rejecting claims 1-3, 16-17 and 26-35. Therefore, Appellant's Brief was due February 21, 2005. A Petition for One Month Extension of Time, together with the requisite fee, is enclosed thereby extending the response due date to March 21, 2005. Appellant's Brief together with the requisite fee set forth in 37 CFR § 1.17 is submitted herewith.

03/22/2005 EABUBAK1 00000023 09336706

02 FC:1402

500.00 OP

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST (37 CFR § 41.37(c)(1)(i))

The real party in interest is Fujitsu Limited, the assignee of the subject application.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES (37 CFR § 41.37(c)(1)(ii))

The applicant and the undersigned representative are not aware of any other appeals or interferences that will directly affect or be directly affected by, or have a bearing on, the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS (37 CFR § 41.37(c)(1)(iii))

Claims 1-3 and 13-35 are pending.

Claims 13-15 and 18-25 are withdrawn.

Claims 1-3, 16-17 and 26-35 stand rejected and are on appeal.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS (37 CFR § 41.37(c)(1)(iv))

No amendments have been filed subsequent to the final rejection made on September 21, 2004.

V. SUMMARY OF INVENTION (37 CFR § 41.37(c)(1)(v))

Claim 1

Claim 1 recites a method of displaying messages (display apparatus 11, Figure 1; Figure 2) with a chat client (chat system 30, Figure 1) in an information exchange system for transmitting and receiving the messages. The chat client transmits and receives the messages

to and/or from at least two independent chat networks (Network A, Network B, Figures 2, 7, and 8; page 7, line 24, to page 8, line 5; "a user terminal can be connected to a plurality of [chat] networks, and has a message display area for displaying a message transmitted and/or received to/from each [chat] network", page 4, lines 28-34; page 14, lines 2-6; page 18, lines 5-10). The chat networks each have one or more chat servers ("IRC" and RFC 1459, page 1, page 8, lines 1-5; also see the discussion below) that provide independent chat communication service (page 8, lines 1-5; see also discussion below) to chat clients, where the chat client is in chat communication with the two chat networks concurrently over a period of time (page 17, lines 20-29; Figure 2 shows client 30 connected to chat network A and chat network B; "system [client] 30 is connected to the IRC network A ... is similarly connected to the IRC network B", page 7, lines 31-34; page 18, lines 5-17).

The method of claim 1 involves designating, with the client, at least one of the two chat networks as an active chat network for receiving messages transmitted by the client. The specification discloses at least two instances of this feature.

First, Figure 2 shows display areas 300 (chat network A) and 310 (chat network B). Chat network A can be designated by activating or selecting display area 300, and chat network B can be designated by activating or selecting display area 310 (page 2, lines 24-34; selecting a display area is inherent). When area 300 is active, then the messages input at 300-5 are sent to chat network A. When area 310 is activated, then messages input at 310-5 go to chat network B.

Second, a message (or indicia thereof) can be selected to designate a chat network. Figure 2 shows a display area 200 that displays messages received from both chat network A and chat network B (Figure 2, item 200; page 8, line 32, to page 9, line 4). A message can be selected or "clicked" in display area 200 (Figure 7, "LINE DESIGNATION"; page 14, lines 20-24). Clicking a message either changes the current channel (page 14, line 25, to page 15, line 9), or, activates the display area corresponding to the selected message (page 15, lines 19-29). In another embodiment, a chat network is designated by selecting a message in display area 200, and a small message window is displayed for submitting a message to the chat network and channel of the selected message (Figure 11, "MESSAGE WINDOW"; page 16, lines 3-34).

Figure 9 also shows a process for obtaining an IRC network name from the identified/selected message (S2411) and transmitting a corresponding channel switching instruction to the chat system 30 (S2412).

The method of claim 1 also involves obtaining, with the client, the messages, at least some of which are transmitted to or received from a first of the at least two chat networks, and at least some of which are transmitted to or received from a second of the at least two chat networks (page 13, lines 16-20; page 14, lines 2-5), and displaying, with the client, the obtained messages in a first discrete display area independent of a message display area of each of the plurality of chat networks (Figure 2, display area 200; page 14, lines 2-6). Discrete display area 200 is independent of a message display area of chat network A (Figure 2, area 300) and is also independent of a message display area of chat network B (Figure 2, area 310).

Claims 2 and 31 recite similar features.

As mentioned above, claim 1 recites features related to two different chat networks. Because the current rejections revolve around the Examiner's interpretation of the phrase "chat network" in claims 1, 2, and 31, following is a detailed discussion of the meaning of "chat network".

Chat Background

The Examiner cited "TOURBUS: Tuesday, August 13, 1996/DRIVER: Bob Rankin/TODAY'S TOURBUS STOP: Internet Relay Chat". This reference states that:

If you've ever ventured into a chat room on commercial services such as America Online or CompuServe, you have an idea what IRC is like. IRC can be compared to using a CB radio – you tune in to a specific chat channel, give yourself a handle (nickname), and participate in a live conversation with one or more people by typing messages back and forth. Anyone connected to the same channel can read your messages.

Chat participants exchange messages in near real time so that, absent filtering, generally all participants see all messages sent by all participants. A typical chat message area is seen in Figure 2. Display area 300-3 displays messages submitted by participants "ando", "fuku", "sato", and "okada", each of whom would have a similar message display area with similar content. A

message input area 300-5 is used to input and submit a message to the chat participants. Generally, each chat participant will see the messages submitted by themselves and the other participants. If participant "okada" enters "hello", then other participants (and Okada) will see on their displays, among previous messages, something like "okada: hello", or perhaps "13:26 <okada>: hello".

Inter-messaging participants are sometimes said to form a chat room, a chat channel, a common communication field, etc. As a crowded room can become noisy, so can a chat channel. Therefore, a chat network design has been used to commonly provide and manage an independent chat service with many users and many chat channels. A chat network provides multiple chat channels. Participants in the chat network view and submit messages to channels in which they are participating. For example, in Figure 2, the user of the display screen is participating in the "#road" channel (see 300-2) on the "B" chat network, and also the "#test" channel on the "A" chat network.

"Chat Network" In View of Specification, Claims, And Ordinary Meaning

The present claims recite features of a chat client (or method thereof) that concurrently connects to multiple different chat networks. The claims are rejected in part based on a broad interpretation of "chat network". Following is a discussion of how one of ordinary skill in the art would interpret "chat network" in view of the specification, the ordinary meaning, and the claims themselves.

The specification sheds some light on the proper meaning of "chat network". At page 1, lines 14-31 mention that multiple users have a "common communication area (i.e., the same network)". A common communication field (channel) is where "users ... can observe the contents of messages originated by themselves, as well as the contents of messages transmitted by other users in the same communication field". Figure 2 shows that "chat system 30 (chat client) is connected to the IRC network A, and the display area 310, also displayed by the chat system 30, is similarly connected to the IRC network B" (page 7, bottom). Furthermore, "[i]n this example, the [Internet Relay Chat] network is defined as a logical network formed in units of services [e.g. channels] offered to users of the chat system 30, and is different from a physical network. Additionally, a plurality of channels exist [sic] as the common communication

fields within each IRC network. The common communication field is hereinafter referenced to as a 'channel'" (page 8, top). Thus, the specification explains that each independent chat network has its own set of channels, users, etc.

Regarding the ordinary meaning to one skilled in the art, page 1, lines 14-31, explain that multiple users have a "common communication area (i.e., the same network)". Here, "the same network" refers to a same *chat* network. The specification then mentions Request For Comments (RFC) 1459 as a protocol that is often used to provide a communication area, or "chat network" (page 1, lines 20-22). The RFC 1459 document was published in 1993 and is informative of what an artisan would have understood "chat network" to mean at the time of invention. Although RFC 1459 is only one possible protocol for a chat network, it is highly instructive because it is the most widely used chat protocol. Many of the references cited by the Examiner cite RFC 1459. For example, see column 4 lines 19-29 of U.S. Patent No. 6,212,548 to DeSimone.

RFC 1459 is readily available on the Internet. Section 1.1 of RFC 1459 shows and describes an "IRC [chat] network". Section 1.3 describes how a group of IRC/chat servers (a chat network) cooperate to maintain a common set of channels and users. Section 3 describes how IRC servers in a chat network cooperate through the sharing of administrative messages. In particular, see section 3.3.3. Section 8.5 describes how a server sends out a new nickname to the other servers in its chat network. Section 9.1 mentions that usually all servers in a chat network know about all other servers and users. Section 9.2.2 notes that all servers in a chat network know about all channels, their inhabitants, and their properties. Note, however, that only one server is actually required to form a chat network.

Following are some other indications of the ordinary meaning, to an artisan, of the term "chat network". The Examiner cited "A Short IRC Primer" by Nicolas Pioch. Page 19 of Pioch shows a "/TRACE" command, and a "/LINKS" client command, which "shows a list of servers currently connected to the [Internet Relay *Chat*] network". "IRC Networks and Server Lists", submitted by Applicant with the May 11, 2004 Amendment, states that "This site highlights just some of the over 800 independent IRC networks out there, each with its own channels and people (first paragraph). "Servers and IRC Networks", also submitted May 11, 2004, mentions

that "IRC networks consist of groups of servers in close contact with each other. Hundreds of such worldwide networks exist. The servers in a network maintain contact between you and all other users." "Chatting on the Net", also submitted on May 11, 2004, mentions that "All servers on a [chat] network share and [exchange the] same information. Each server knows who is on the network, what channel that user is on, and which server as well. ... There are many IRC networks. Each network is a separate entity unto itself. ... The [chat] networks DO NOT share common servers. You CANNOT talk to a user that is not on the same [network]. If your friend is on the #newbies channel on EFnet [a chat network], and you are on the #newbies channel on DALnet [another chat network], you cannot [chat with him] because he is on a DIFFERENT network." The Free Online Dictionary of Computing (www.foldoc.org) also mentions IRC: "A client-server chat system of large (often worldwide) networks. IRC is structured as networks of Internet servers, each accepting connections from client programs, one per user."

The claims themselves also define a chat network. Claim 1 recites a chat client transmitting and receiving the messages to and/or from at least two independent chat networks that each have one or more chat servers that provide independent chat communication service to chat clients, where the chat client is in chat communication with the two chat networks concurrently over a period of time.

In sum, a "chat network" is a well-understood term of art, and in particular connotes logical autonomy; one chat network is distinct from other chat networks and provides chat service independent from the chat service provided other chat networks.

VI. GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL (37 CFR § 41.37(c)(1)(vi))

Claims 1, 26, 27, and 34 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph.

Claims 1, 16, 17, 28-33, and 35 stand rejected as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,990,887 to Redpath in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,828,839 to Moncreiff.

All references below to "Office Action" refer to the Office Action mailed September 21, 2004.

VII. ARGUMENT OF EACH GROUND OF REJECTION PRESENTED FOR REVIEW (37 CFR § 41.37(c)(1)(vii))

1. Rejection of claims 1, 26, 27, and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph.

A. Claims 1 and 34

Chat Networks

Claim 1 recites that "each chat network has one or more servers". Item 3 of the Office Action held that this feature is not disclosed in the specification. The specification notes on page 1 that Internet Relay Chat (IRC) is defined by RFC 1459. The specification goes on to mention IRC networks (e.g. IRC network A and IRC network B). As explained in section V above, an IRC network, an example of a "chat network", is a logical network of one or more servers cooperating to provide chat service distinct from the chat service of other IRC or chat networks. It is implicit in the specification that an IRC or chat network has one or more servers. See, for example, RFC 1459.

Claim 1 also recites that "a chat network is designated as a current destination". At item 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 1 as lacking support in the specification for this feature. As explained above in section V, a user can designate a current chat network destination by, for example, selecting a message in display area 200. This causes a switching to the chat network that sent the selected message. The switching can be in the form of activating a display area (e.g. 300 or 310) corresponding to the designated chat network. That is, if a user selects, in area 200, a message from chat network A, then display area 310 is activated and chat network A becomes the current destination for messages sent by the chat client 30. Alternatively, a message input area can be displayed for sending a message to the chat network and channel of the selected message. For support see the discussion above in section V (Claim 1). See also pages 14-15: "user identifies the message of the display area 200

using ... a pointing device ... Upon detection of a double-click as the switching instruction .. the message transmission processing means 24 analyzes the contents of the identified message to obtain ... the IRC network name ... Using the IRC network name ... the message transmission processing means 24 generates the main-channel switching instruction ... and transmits this instruction to the chat system [client] 30 ... when the display area 300 and 310 of the chat system 30, to which the relevant IRC network is connected, are not activated, the display area is activated". In other words, when a user selects a message in display area 200, the corresponding display area is activated (e.g. chat network A 300 or chat network B 310) and the channel is set to the channel of the selected message.

Claim 1 also recites that the chat client is in communication with the two chat networks concurrently over a period of time. At item 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected this feature as lacking support in the specification. At page 7, lines 27-34, the specification states that "display area 300 and 310 are connected to the service offering users of the two chat systems [i.e. the two chat networks] ... the chat system 30 [client] is connected to the IRC network A, and the display area 310 ... is ... connected to the IRC network B". Also, "messages received [from] the IRC network A and ... [from] the IRC network B" are displayed in display area 200 (page 8, lines 1-4). Furthermore, display areas 300 and 310 are displayed at the same time and each reflects a connection with a respective chat network (see page 14, lines 6-12, noting "the chat system [is] connected to the IRC network B ... chat system 30, connected to the IRC network A"). Also, the specification summarizes that "users can transmit and/or receive messages via plurality of networks, even when the number of networks connected by users increases, contents of messages can be consolidated to the same area" (page 18, lines 6-10). Furthermore, it is inherent that a client connected to two chat networks, each with its own chat display area, is necessarily communicating with those two networks, for example by receiving chat messages from them.

Claim 34 was rejected only because it depends from claim 1.

B. Claims 26 and 27.

Claims 26 and 27 recite limitations deemed by the Examiner to be negative limitations, that lack sufficient disclosure. According to claim 26, "each independent chat network comprises its own set of chat channels separate from the other chat network, where a channel in the first chat network and a different channel in the second chat network are allowed to each have a same identifier for users to select such channels but where such different channels do not share messages." The Examiner rejected this limitation because "where different channels do not share messages" is a negative limitation lacking explicit support. As discussed above, claims 26 and 27 recite well-known and inherent features of IRC/chat networks. As established in section V above, it was well-known at the time of invention that chat networks do not share, for example, channels or messages. For example, although "Chatting on the Net" (submitted May 1, 2004) is undated, it correctly summarizes RFC 1459 and IRC. "Chatting on the Net" notes that "There are many IRC [chat] networks. Each network is a separate entity unto itself. One network DOES NOT [cooperate with another] network. The networks DO NOT share common servers. You CANNOT talk to a user that is not on the same [network]". In sum, claim 26 has support because embodiments in the disclosure are clearly implemented at least for (but not limited to) IRC, and an IRC/chat network does not share messages with another IRC/chat network.

Claim 27 was rejected because it states that "chat messages are not exchanged between the two chat networks." The same arguments above relating to claim 26 are applicable to claim 27.

2. Rejection of claims 1, 16, 17, 28-33, and 35 under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

A. Claim 1

Claim 1 recites a chat client transmitting and receiving messages to and/or from at least two independent chat networks that each have one or more chat servers that provide independent chat communication service to chat clients, where the chat client is in chat

communication with the two chat networks concurrently over a period of time.

The Examiner has interpreted a "chat network" to correspond to a chat session involving at least two participants. In other words, the Examiner is interpreting a "chat network" to be the equivalent to a chat channel or a chat room. This conclusion is explained below.

At item 9 of the Office Action, the Examiner compares "designating a chat network" to Redpath, column 3, lines 3-13, and Figure 2, which only teach establishing a "chat session" between two or more users. The Examiner also compares a chat network to a chat communication session at item 11 of the Office Action. Claim 1 also recites that the chat client is in concurrent communication with the two chat networks over a period of time. The Examiner notes that in Redpath only one chat session (putative "chat network") is disclosed. The Examiner compares obtaining messages from two chat networks to column 3, lines 3-32 of Redpath. Again, this portion of Redpath actually teaches one chat session or channel. The Examiner cites Moncreiff as teaching that a user can participate in multiple chat sessions at one time. Therefore, it is apparent that the Examiner is comparing a "chat network" to a chat session or chat channel.

As previously explained, the chat networks in claim 1 are significantly different than a chat session or chat channel. For example, if a chat session/channel is equivalent to a chat network, then it must, as in claim 1, provide independent chat communication service to chat clients. However, clearly a chat channel does not provide independent chat communication service to chat clients. Rather, a chat session/channel is itself a unit of the chat service provided by a chat network. Chat sessions/channels do not provide any service, they are simply a unit or division of the chat service provided by a chat network. When a user joins or establishes a chat session, they are taking advantage of a pre-existing service such as a chat server or a chat network. Put another way, chat sessions/channels don't *provide* service, they are a measure of the service *provided* by a chat network, chat server, etc. Like a chat channel, a telephone number is a service provided by a telephone network.

Furthermore, claim 1 recites that each chat network has one or more chat servers that provide independent chat communication service. No server is cited in Redpath. And, as seen in Figures 9 and 9A of Moncreiff, the different chat rooms or chat sessions are all provided by the same chat server (see column 3, lines 34-44). Therefore, the combination of Redpath and

Moncreiff still only has one chat network (the chat server in Moncreiff). As explained above, chat rooms or channels, as in Moncreiff, are not independent networks of server(s) providing independent chat communication service.

At item 9 of the Office Action (second to last paragraph), the Examiner compares chat network communication through a chat network to chat services provided by different ISPs. However, this highlights the distinction between a chat network and a chat session. An ISP often will provide its own chat network. See column 1, lines 14-20, mentioning that ISPs provide different chat facilities (chat networks). This also illustrates an inconsistency in the rejection. The rejection compares a chat network to the service provided by an ISP or an ISP's server. The rejection, inconsistently, also compares a chat network to a chat session or chat channel.

Improper Claim Interpretation

It appears that one reason for the rejection is that the Examiner is improperly interpreting "chat network". At item 7 of the Office Action, the Examiner states: "Claim interpretation: according to applicant's disclosure: a chat network is a unit of service provided to the user". This interpretation is improper for the following reasons.

First, the interpretation is improper because the specification states that a chat network is formed in units of services, which is not the same as saying that a chat network is a unit of service.

Second, as discussed in the MPEP, during examination, claims are interpreted as broadly as their terms reasonably allow. The words of the claim must be given their plain meaning unless applicant has provided a clear definition in the specification. The words in a claim are generally not limited in their meaning by what is shown or disclosed in the specification. It is only when the specification provides definitions for terms appearing in the claims that the specification can be used in interpreting claim language. The specification does not provide a clear definition of "chat network". The specification actually states "In this example, the IRC network is defined as ...".

Third, the interpretation is also incorrect because the proposed meaning is not the plain meaning given to the term "chat network" by those of ordinary skill in the art. When not defined by an applicant in the specification, the words of a claim must be given their plain meaning. In

other words, they must be read as they would be interpreted by those of ordinary skill in the art. During prosecution, words in patent claims are given their ordinary meaning in the usage of the field of the invention, unless the text of the patent makes clear that a word was used with a special meaning. The present specification uses IRC/chat network consistent with the ordinary meaning to those of ordinary skill in the art (see the discussion in section V). One of ordinary skill in the art does not interpret a "chat network" to be "a unit of service provided to a user". As discussed above, the ordinary meaning of "chat network" is more specific than this very broad interpretation. As stated in the MPEP, the broadest reasonable interpretation of the claims must be consistent with the interpretation that those skilled in the art would reach.

Displaying Messages From Two Chat Networks

Claim 1 also recites displaying the messages obtained from the two chat networks in a first discrete display area independent of a message display area of each of the plurality of chat networks. The Examiner compares this feature to items 602, 608, 616, and 622 of Figures 6A and 6B in Redpath. However, the display window 602 only displays messages of one chat session. Even using the Examiner's incorrect interpretation of a "chat network" as covering a chat session or channel, Redpath fails to disclose a display area with messages from two chat networks. The display areas 602 in Redpath only display messages for one chat session. As discussed above, Redpath does not have concurrent communication with two chat networks and therefore cannot display messages sent/received to/from two chat networks in one display area (that is independent of display areas for the chat networks).

Designating a Chat Network

Claim 1 also recites designating, with the client, at least one of the two chat networks as an active chat network for receiving messages transmitted by the client. For comparison, the Examiner cites only column 3, lines 3-32 of Redpath. However, first, this portion of Redpath does not discuss designating any one of a plurality of anything, and second, this portion of Redpath does not discuss or suggest designating one of two chat networks that are in concurrent communication with the client. This portion of Redpath only describes establishing a user establishing a chat session.

B. Claims 16 and 17

Claim 16 recites that the displaying of the obtained messages in the first discrete display area comprises displaying messages of both chat networks in the discrete display area independent of another display area for displaying messages of only one of the chat networks. Again, if the Examiner's interpretation of a chat network is adopted, then there would be one display area in Redpath that displays messages of only one chat channel, and there would be another display area that displays messages of that chat channel as well as another chat channel. However, Redpath has no such disclosure.

Similarly, claim 17 recites that the discrete display area is separate from another display area that is dedicated to the active chat network. Redpath only discloses a window for one chat session/channel.

C. Claim 28

Claim 28 recites that the chat networks are different logical chat networks and a message received by the client is identified according to the network from which it was received. As previously discussed, a chat session/channel as in Redpath is not a logical chat network.

D. Claim 31

Claim 31 recites plural chat networks, obtaining, and displaying messages and is patentable for corresponding reasons given above (note claim 31 does not recite designating a chat network, as does claim 1).

E. Claims 29, 30, 32, 33, and 35 are deemed patentable due to their dependence on claims discussed above.

3. Claims 2 and 3

Claim 2 recites features similar to claim 1 and is similarly patentable. Claim 2 also recites means-for clauses. Therefore, claim 2 has additional distinctions. Claim 2 recites designation means designating at least one chat network of the plurality of chat networks as an active chat network for receiving messages transmitted by a user terminal. A structure in the specification that performs this function is the display area 200. This display area has a mechanism for allowing a user to select a message from either of two chat networks to thereby designate the corresponding chat network. Redpath has no teaching of designating a chat network by selecting a message. Claim 2 also recites message displaying means for displaying the acquired messages (of the two chat networks) in a discrete display area independent of a message display area of each of the plurality of chat networks. In the specification, the messages displayed in display area 200 have an associated channel name and chat network name. There is no equivalent in Redpath. This also further highlights the distinction between a chat network and a chat channel.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

Date: 3/21/5

By: 

J. Randall Beckers
Registration No. 30,358

1201 New York Ave, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20005
Telephone: (202) 434-1500
Facsimile: (202) 434-1501

CLAIMS APPENDIX (37 CFR § 41.37(c)(1)(viii))

1. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method of displaying messages with a chat client in an information exchange system for transmitting and receiving the messages, the chat client transmitting and receiving the messages to and/or from at least two independent chat networks that each have one or more chat servers that provide independent chat communication service to chat clients, where the chat client is in chat communication with the two chat networks concurrently over a period of time, the method comprising:

designating, with the client, at least one of the two chat networks as an active chat network for receiving messages transmitted by the client;

obtaining, with the client, the messages, at least some of which are transmitted to or received from a first of the at least two chat networks, and at least some of which are transmitted to or received from a second of the at least two chat networks; and

displaying, with the client, the obtained messages in a first discrete display area independent of a message display area of each of the plurality of chat networks.

2. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An information exchange system in which user terminals are configured for connection to a plurality of chat networks to transmit and receive messages through the plurality of chat networks, the user terminals having a message display area displaying messages transmitted and received to/from each of the plurality of chat networks, comprising:

designation means designating at least one chat network of the plurality of chat networks as an active chat network for receiving messages transmitted by a user terminal;

message acquiring means of the user terminal for acquiring messages transmitted and received to/from each of the plurality of chat networks; and

message displaying means of the user terminal for displaying, the acquired messages in a discrete display area independent of a message display area of each of the plurality of chat networks.

3. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An information exchange system according to claim 2, further comprising

message transmission cooperating means of the client for transmitting one of the messages, when the message displayed by said message displaying means is identified for message transmission, to one of the chat networks in the plurality of chat networks to which said identified message is transmitted.

4-12. CANCELLED.

13. (WITHDRAWN) A method, comprising:
obtaining a plurality of messages to be transmitted or received by a chat client over at least two chat networks to which the chat client is connected;
concentrating the obtained messages; and
independently displaying the concentrated messages together in a discrete display area.

14. (WITHDRAWN) A computer readable storage controlling a computer by,
obtaining a plurality of messages to be transmitted or received by a chat client over at least two chat networks to which the chat client is connected;
concentrating the obtained messages; and
independently displaying the concentrated messages together in a discrete display area.

15. (WITHDRAWN) An apparatus, comprising:
a communication unit obtaining a plurality of messages to be transmitted or received over at least one of a plurality of designated chat networks;
a processing unit concentrating the obtained messages; and
a display unit independently displaying the concentrated messages together in a discrete display area.

16. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method according to claim 1, wherein the displaying comprises displaying messages of both chat networks in the discrete display area independent of another display area for displaying messages of only one of the chat networks.

17. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method according to claim 1, wherein the discrete display area is separate from another display area that is dedicated to the active chat network.

18. (WITHDRAWN) A method of displaying messages in a chat client, comprising:
connecting the chat client to a first chat channel of a first chat network;
connecting the chat client to a second chat channel of a second chat network; and
displaying in a discrete display area of the client, messages received by the chat client from the first and second chat channels.

19. (WITHDRAWN) A method according to claim 18, further comprising using the client to display, in a chat display area dedicated to displaying messages of an active chat channel, the messages received from the first chat channel, where the active chat channel is the first chat channel.

20. (WITHDRAWN) A method according to claim 19, further comprising:
setting the first chat channel as the active chat channel by interactively selecting a message of the first chat channel that is displayed in the discrete display area.

21. (WITHDRAWN) A method according to claim 18, further comprising changing a current active chat network of the chat client from the first chat network to the second chat network in response to and based on interactively selecting a previously displayed chat message of the second chat network.

22. (WITHDRAWN) A chat client simultaneously connecting to at least two distinct and autonomous chat networks, comprising:
a first message display area capable of displaying only chat messages of a first of the chat networks;
a second message display area capable of displaying only messages of a second of the chat networks; and

a third message display area simultaneously displaying some messages of the first chat network and some messages of the second chat network, where the client responds to interactively selecting the first chat network by displaying or making active the first message display area.

23. (WITHDRAWN) A method according to claim 13, wherein the displaying is done in a time series basis.

24. (WITHDRAWN) A computer readable storage according to claim 14, wherein the displaying is done in a time series basis.

25. (WITHDRAWN) An apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the displaying is done in a time series basis.

26. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method according to claim 1, wherein each independent chat network comprises its own set of chat channels separate from the other chat network, where a channel in the first chat network and a different channel in the second chat network are allowed to each have a same identifier for users to select such channels but where such different channels do not share messages.

27. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method according to claim 1, wherein chat messages are not exchanged between the two chat networks.

28. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method according to claim 1, wherein the chat networks are different logical chat networks and where a message received by the client is identified according to the network from which it was received.

29. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method according to claim 1, wherein the discrete display area is a window of the chat client.

30. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A volatile or non-volatile computer-readable storage storing information to allow a computer to perform the method of claim 1.

31. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method of displaying messages with a chat client in an information exchange system for transmitting and receiving the messages, the chat client transmitting and receiving the messages to and/or from at least two independent chat networks that provide independent chat communication service to chat clients, where the chat client is in chat communication with the two chat networks concurrently over a period of time, the method comprising:

obtaining, with the client, the messages, at least some of which are transmitted to or received from a first of the at least two chat networks, and at least some of which are transmitted to or received from a second of the at least two chat networks; and

displaying, with the client, the obtained messages in a first discrete display area.

32. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method according to claim 31, wherein the first discrete display area comprises a window of the chat client.

33. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method according to claim 31, wherein messages to or from the two chat networks and displayed in the discrete display area are interspersedly transmitted and received by the chat client over the period of time.

34. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method according to claim 31, wherein one of the chat networks is designated as a current destination for messages to be transmitted by the client when a user selects a corresponding message displayed in the discrete display area.

35. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A volatile or non-volatile computer-readable storage storing information to allow a computer to perform the method according to claim 31.

Serial No. 09/274,250

RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX (37 CFR § 41.37(c)(2))

Not applicable.

Serial No. 09/274,250

EVIDENCE APPENDIX (37 CFR § 41.37(c)(2))

Not applicable.